GRAPEVINE
VISITACION·VALLEY

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Welcoming Families to Kindergarten

Parents and children enjoyed a dinner at Visitacion Valley Elementary School recently as part of a Kindergarten Orientation with two other elementary schools.

More than 100 parents and children recently attended a Kindergarten Orientation at Visitacion Valley Elementary School (VVES). Preschool families had dinner at VVES, followed by presentations from principals of three neighboring elementary schools – VVES, El Dorado and E.R Taylor – and an explanation of the schools' programs and expectations. Childcare was provided, as was translation in both Chinese and Spanish. *See Page3*

Crisis Report Finds Some Bay Area Governments Failing to Fill Housing Gap

The Bay Area Housing Crisis Report Card, the first city-by-city look at housing plans, recently revealed that 72 percent of Bay Area governments are failing to take the most basic steps to address the affordable housing shortage.

The Report Card, jointly issued by the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH), the region's voice on housing solutions for lower-income people, and Greenbelt Alliance, the Bay Area's leading land conservation and urban planning non-profit, reports why some local governments are at the head of the class while others are flunking out. The Report Card exposes Bay Area governments' contribution to the affordable housing crisis, but also uncovers three commonsense steps that can turn failure into success.

At a time when families and working individuals are struggling to make ends meet, this Report Card puts Bay Area leaders on alert that the region's housing crisis will escalate unless they adopt solutions now.

The Bay Area Housing Crisis Report Card examined the future plans of 40 key cities and counties, which represent 80 percent of the region's projected housing needs. By state law, local governments were required to complete plans called "housing elements"öby the end of last year, showing how they intend to provide for needed housing. This Report Card shows almost one-third of these cities have not even released draft housing elements.

"Cities say they want more carrot and less stick from Sacramento," said Dianne Spaulding, Executive Director of NPH. "But when so many shirk their basic responsibilities to facilitate new housing, they certainly invite the stick." NPH has endorsed a bill pending in the California legislature, SB 910, which would create sanctions for local governments that fail to comply with state housing element law.

Even among cities that have plans, most omit essential programs and policies that get homes, especially affordable homes, built. For example, only half the cities and counties require that new housing include some "below-market rate" homes that are affordable to lower- or moderate-income families. Still fewer local governments are investing enough local funds to create affordable homes. In addition, many cities are not taking adequate steps to encourage the location of homes near shops and transit, which would alleviate traffic and create more vibrant neighborhoods.

"A few cities stood out for their efforts to encourage affordable housing," noted Tom Steinbach, Executive Director of Greenbelt Alliance. "The fact that some Bay Area governments are doing it right shows that all Bay Area governments could do it right."

Three commonsense local government actions could double the production of affordable homes, adding at least 23,000 new homes over ten years:

1) Create housing choices: more town homes, apartments and start-up homes.

2) Invest local funds in affordable housing: such as housing trust funds, and private sector contribution in the form of fees for jobs created.

3) Require that new housing include affordable units: a strategy called inclusionary zoning.

As the Report Card shows, these policies are already in place and have proven effective in some Bay Area cities and counties that are serious about solving the housing crisis. Combined with additional federal and state investment in affordable housing – which will be on the California ballot in November, and taken up by the U.S. Congress these actions could put an end to the severe shortage of affordable housing in the Bay Area. *See Page 7*

August Library Events At Visitacion Branch

**Summer Reading Raffle* - For all those who have completed 8 hours of reading, this is your chance to win more fabulous prizes on Saturday, Aug. 10 at 1:30 p.m. You must be present to win.

**Kindermusik with Miss Joanne* (For ages 3-5) on Tuesday, Aug. 13 at 10:30 a.m.

Visitacion Valley Branch Library is located at 45 Leland Ave. at the corner of Desmond Street.

Booklet Highlights Third Street Light Rail Art Work by Neighborhood Youth

The future Third Street Light Rail will have 40 permanent new art works by neighborhood youth at transit platforms serving Visitacion Valley, as well as Potrero Hill and Bayview Hunters Point.

A free full-color booklet titled *Third Street Light Rail Youth Arts Program* published by the San Francisco Arts Commission highlights reproductions of selected works by 14 young people, ages 9 to 16, who participated in the program. To obtain a copy of the booklet, call Judy Moran at (415) 252-2586.

The youth worked in smaller groups with local artist Sheila Ghidini during a five-month period last year at the Visitacion Valley Community Beacon Center, Potrero Hill Neighborhood House and Bayview Opera House.

Visitacion Valley participants included Markeda Cottonham. 10; Alisha Miller, 11; Roberto Salazar, 13; and Shayisha Warr, 12.

Under Ghidini's guidance, the youth explored themes related to transit, neighborhoods and personal journeys as a basis for their photographs, drawings, paintings and prints. The Arts Commission will adapt the selected designs for reproduction on fiberglass panels to be installed on the windscreens at 20 transit platforms along the Third Street Light Rail Corridor.

The Third Street Light Rail Youth Arts Program was initiated by the Arts Commission as part of a larger art enrichment project to enhance the transit experience for passengers at the new platforms along the corridor.

The Third Street Light Rail is scheduled for completion in late 2005.

Home Ownership Measure Makes November Ballot

Supporters of the Home Ownership Program for Everyone (HOPE) submitted more than 25,000 signatures to the San Francisco Department of Elections on July 8 to qualify their initiative to allow renters to purchase their units for the November 2002 ballot.

"San Francisco renters want a piece of the American dream," said Joe Capko, official proponent of HOPE and leader of Tenants for Home Ownership. "The City's hard-working renters broke new ground in grassroots organizing to get us closer o that dream. We've collected the signatures for HOPE and now we'll get to vote for it."

HOPE allows tenants in apartment buildings the opportunity to but their own units. Under the proposal, if at least 25 percent of tenants in the building and the owner of the building agree, the tenants could buy their apartments. Tenants who don't wish to buy could remain in their units with stronger eviction protections and the same rent control they currently enjoy.

San Francisco has a homeownership rate of 34 percent, while the U.S. averages a rate of 68 percent with other cities such as Seattle at 63 percent and San Diego at 59 percent.

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, equity in a home is the largest single source of wealth for most families in the United States.

"I am thrilled that the voters of San Francisco have demonstrated their resounding commitment to homeownership by signing the HOPE petition," said Supervisor Tony Hall, the original author of the legislation. "I look forward to the months ahead as we engage in a public discussion about the tremendous merits of homeownership and how HOPE will enable thousands of San Franciscans to achieve their dream.

HUD Report Identifies Barriers To Minority Home Ownership

WASHINGTON - Despite increases in homeownership among minority families, a new Bush Administration analysis shows that a large gap still exists between minority and white households. The report identifies the multiple barriers to homeownership faced by minority families and outlines steps the Bush Administration is taking to eliminate them, including a total of $2.7 billion in housing initiatives that will help more than 333,000 low- and moderate-income families own their own homes.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Mel Martinez released the report, *Barriers To Minority Homeownership*, as he and President George W Bush visited an Atlanta neighborhood that is being revitalized. The HUD report is based on updated statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau. The analysis shows that since 1994, when the black homeownership rate was 27.5 percentage points below the rate of whites and the Hispanic rate was 28.8 percentage points below, only small gains have been made. By 2001 the gap had been reduced by just 1.6 percentage points for African-Americans and 1.8 percentage points for Hispanic households.

On June 15, President Bush devoted his Radio Address to the Nation to the barriers faced by minority homeowners. "Today, while nearly three-quarters of all white Americans own their homes, less than half of all African Americans and Hispanic Americans are homeowners. We must begin to close this homeownership gap by dismantling the barriers that prevent minorities from owning a piece of the American dream," the President said.

"Our analysis shows that many minority Americans face significant barriers to homeownership, from saving money for a down payment, to unnecessary local regulation, to continued housing discrimination," said HUD Secretary Martinez. "The American Dream should be more than just a dream for America's minorities," he added. "Through our commitment and the President's initiatives we will help more minority families make the American Dream a reality."

Barriers to Minority Homeownership

HUD's analysis identified five significant barriers that prevent minority families from becoming homeowners. Those barriers include:

*Lack of capital for the down payment and closing costs, often the single greatest barrier to homeownership;

*Lack of access to credit and poor credit histories, which means more minority families are rejected for a mortgage loan or given loans with high interest rates;

*Lack of understanding and information about the homebuying process, especially for families for whom English is a second language;

*Regulatory burdens imposed on the production of housing - zoning, land development and site planning, building codes - and when barriers are intentional through the "Not In My Back Yard" syndrome; and

*Illegal housing discrimination.

Overcoming Barriers

The report highlights $2.7 billion in Bush Administration initiatives to help minority families become homeowners:

* To help with down payment costs, the President's FY2003 budget proposed $200 million for the American Dream Downpayment Fund, which will set 130,000 first-time homebuyers on the path to owning their own home.

*The Administration has also proposed providing thousands of low-income Americans the opportunity to move into their own homes with the help of HUD's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. The new plan enables low-income families to use up to one-year's worth of housing voucher payments toward the down payment on a home.

*Housing counseling is a proven resource that can address the lack of understanding many minority families have about the homebuying process, as well as a financial literacy and credit rehabilitation tool for families with poor credit histories.

The Administration has proposed a separate $35 million housing counseling program -- a 75 percent increase in funding -- to complement the Department's array of new homeownership initiatives. For example, the additional funding will enable counseling agencies hire and train bilingual counselors and also produce written materials in multiple languages to reach out to minority households.

*Another initiative to encourage homeownership is SHOP, the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program. SHOP empowers faith-based and other community organizations, like Habitat for Humanity and others dedicated to turning low-income Americans into homeowners, and the Administration has proposed tripling SHOP funds to $65 million. This will help support the construction of 3,800 homes, fueled in part by the "sweat equity" of participating families.

*In addition, the Administration has proposed a $2.4 billion Single-Family Affordable Tax Credit that will help develop and rehabilitate 200,000 single-family homes. This investor-based tax credit will encourage developers and non-profit organizations to build new single-family affordable houses or rehabilitate existing ones, and will result in additional affordable homes available for purchase in low-income neighborhoods.

Private Sector Involvement

Barriers To Minority Homeownership found that the overall minority homeownership rate in 1994 was 26.8 percentage points below the rate for white households. By 2001, the gap had been reduced only 1.5 percentage points for all minorities. It concluded that if the persistent gaps in minority homeownership are to be substantially narrowed, the structural barriers faced by minority families, or those that have a pronounced effect on minority communities, must be eliminated.

It noted that the increase in minority homeownership occurred in an extremely positive low-interest-rate, low-unemployment economic environment. Moreover, during the 1990s the conventional mortgage industry began offering a wider range of affordable lending programs. The analysis determined that these factors are not enough to close the homeownership gap. The initial increase of innovation in the conventional market has already reached many of those that were poised to become homeowners, and because future economic conditions are unpredictable, a reduction of the gap in homeownership levels of non-Hispanic whites and other minority families cannot be assumed.

While the Administration's actions will increase minority homeownership, private sector actors involved in the real estate and mortgage lending industries will need to increase their levels of product innovation and marketing to minority families in order to sustain growth rates.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is committed to increasing homeownership, particularly among minorities, creating affordable housing opportunities for low-income Americans, supporting the homeless, elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. HUD also promotes economic and community development and enforces the nation's fair housing laws.

Sign of the Times

If one picture is worth a thousand words, this sign could probably tell many stories of the day.

Grapevine Mailbox

Pedestrian Safety

The topic of *pedestrian safety* usually comes under heated discussion after a rash of accidents occur. Some people then call for more policing, and some call for stiffer fines. But the one key to safer streets for both pedestrians and motorists is preventing accidents before they happen. And that works simply like this:

*If you are on foot and crossing at an intersection, look both ways and make sure it's safe before proceeding. Never assume a vehicle will stop at a light. Always wait for the car to come to a halt before crossing in front of it.

*If you are driving, riding a motorcycle, or biking, be cautious when approaching all intersections. Always be ready to brake. Many accidents between vehicles and pedestrians occur because the speed of a vehicle was not considered.

Len Appiano, Grapevine Editor

Securing San Francisco's Future Water Supply

by Mayor Willie Brown

It is hard to imagine the public health and safety hazards Bay Area residents would face if we were to be cut off from our primary source of water for any extended period of time.. Nevertheless, this is a realistic concern for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and the 2.4 million customers that rely on the Hetch Hetchy water system here in the City and down the Peninsula.

Today, Hetch Hetchy, San Francisco's water and sewer system faces great risks and challenges. Built in the early 1900s, the pipes and tunnels that transport our water from the Sierra Nevada are vulnerable due to age and deterioration. Seismic studies indicate that major components of the system lack critical back-up capabilities and could not withstand a major earthquake.

To address these immense concerns and maintain reliable water services for the Bay Area, the PUC has proposed a long-term capital improvement plan. The comprehensive proposal consists of 87 projects to repair Hetch Hetchy's aging infrastructure and seismic vulnerabilities. The plan also considers the region's growing population – the PUC expects water usage to increase by 64 million gallons per day over the next 30 years.

With Hetch Hetchy serving customers in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Alameda counties, there is no question that it is in everyone's best interest to swiftly repair the system. Yet the capital improvement plan's $3.6 billion price tag has Bay Area lawmakers debating over how taxpayers should share the burden.

For some time, members of the California State Senate and Assembly have recognized their communities' stake in the management of Hetch Hetchy and are moving forward with legislation to protect consumer interests. Representatives of the 1.6 million ratepayers outside the City want more influence in the system's operation. Fair enough – but I believe it's critical we only support legislation that maintains San Francisco's control of our water supply, because this 90-year-old system is among our most important assets.

My office, in partnership with the PUC, is supporting Senator Jackie Speier's San Francisco Bay Area Water Reliability Financing Authority Act. Passed by the Senate in May, Speier's legislation will create a regional financing agency and ensure that each community drawing water from the system invests in the rebuilding process.

At one time, the PUC anticipated San Francisco voters would have to approve a bond financing the entire cost of system upgrades. Under Senator Speier's plan, surrounding communities will contribute $2 billion in bond money and San Francisco will provide the remaining $1.6 billion.

What makes the legislation attractive is that it upholds Hetch Hetchy's standing as a San Francisco asset while sharing the cost of capital projects with surrounding counties that rely on the system.

Meanwhile, Board of Supervisors President Tom Ammiano is leading a public consensus-building process to bring all stakeholders together on the issue and forge a clear path on Hetch Hetchy's future. By bringing together all the interested parties, including tenants, environmentalists and the Chamber of Commerce, Supervisor Ammiano is developing legislation for the November ballot that keeps Hetch Hetchy under local control.

The San Francisco Bay Area's growing population will need to secure a steady and reliable source of water. To do this the PUC must undertake a significant rehabilitation of our water system to ensure delivery of services to all its customers. San Francisco is taking the first steps necessary to strengthen the system for the future.

I will continue to oversee this process, to ensure that our long term needs, as individual consumers and a city as a whole, are met. And I will continue to keep you updated every step of the way.

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S.F. Food Bank Helps Open Sunnydale Pantry

San Francisco Food Bank, the largest distributor of food to low-income families and individuals in the City announced on July 22 the opening of four new food pantries.

The Community Food Pantries (CFP) in the Sunnydale housing complex served nearly 100 families during its first weekly distribution of food – including fresh produce and groceries – in a collaborative effort of the Food Bank with S.F. League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG); Tenants Association of Sunnydale; Boys & Girls Club; YO! Youth Opportunities; S.F. Department of Parks and Recreation; and the Girls After School Academy (GASA).

In addition to Sunnydale, locations were also established in the Mission, OMI, and Sunset districts.

"In addition to distributing to established agencies that offer prepared food to the hungry like Project Open Hand and St. Anthony's, the San Francisco Food Bank works with the community-based nonprofits, congregations and anti-hunger advocates to open and run neighborhood pantry programs," said Paul Ash, executive director of the S.F. Food Bank. "These programs give low-income families and individuals the power to nourish themselves by giving them the groceries they need to be able to prepare their own food in their own homes. by working with organizations that know the community best, these neighborhood pantries make a difference in the lives of more than 5,000 families every week."

Valley's Mr. Coffee

John Feria, owner of Piccolo Pete's European Coffee at 2155 Bayshore Blvd. has recently been waking up the Valley with his eye-opening selection of gourmet blends. Definitely worth a try, we think!

Cell Phone Leads to Arrest In Valley Home Invasions

Police investigating two Visitacion Valley home invasion robberies on July 2 and 7captured one of three men responsible for the invasions two days later.

Sexual assaulta were also involved in both of the robberies .

When a cell phone stolen taken from the first home was used on July 9, the call was traced by police to an apartment in the Sunnydale complex, where a 23-year-old man was arrested. Found at the scene were items belonging to victims of both residences attacked during the previous week, along with drugs and a firearm.

Three Simple Changes To Improve Your Health

A person could spend a lifetime reading about how certain foods may be beneficial to health. Every day new research is published on the finer points of eating well to stay well.

Put down the books and magazines and turn your interest into action. A few simple changes can make a big difference.

1. Eat an extra fruit and an extra vegetable every day. A diet filled with produce is considered helpful to all sorts of health conditions. For example, a recent study looking at the relationship between fruit and vegetable consumption and heart disease, found that for each extra serving of fruits or vegetables a person ate, the risk for heart disease was lowered four percent. The most helpful produce: green leafy vegetables and vitamin C-rich foods such as citrus fruits. Other studies suggest the risk for heart disease could be reduced 20 to 40 percent through a diet filled with fruits and vegetables.

Eating plenty of produce is also linked to a lower risk of cancer. In fact, it's been estimated that diets high in fruits and vegetables (five to 10 servings a day) could prevent at least 20 percent of all cancer incidence. A review of more than 200 studies found that the risk of lung cancer was halved when fruit and vegetable consumption increased from two servings a day to five. Fruits and vegetables seem to have the greatest protective effect against cancers of the mouth, esophagus, lung, stomach, colon and rectum. A diet rich in produce may also boost bone health, cut the risk for cataracts and protect against stroke, high blood pressure and diverticulosis.

2. Drink more nutrient-packed beverages. Many people sip coffee, soda pop or fruit-flavored drinks throughout the day-yet none of these beverages offer much nutritionally. That's a missed opportunity to help your health. Picking a better beverage is an excellent and easy way to get many more vitamins, minerals and other healthful substances into your body. For example, one cup of orange juice gives you double the vitamin C you need in a day plus one-third of the amount of folic acid you should have. Apricot nectar contains one-third of your vitamin A requirement and tomato juice is a good source of vitamins A, B6, C and folic acid plus iron and potassium.

3. Change from plain grains to whole grains. Whole grains are hot. A review of 12 recent studies showed that regularly eating whole grains as part of a healthful diet could reduce heart disease risk by as much as 26 percent. Forty studies that looked at 20 different types of cancer deemed whole grains a winner too. Regularly eating whole-grain foods as part of a low-fat diet reduced the risk of several types of cancer by 10 to 60 percent. And, whole grains may protect against diabetes. The Iowa Women's Health Study of nearly 90,000 women found that women who ate more than five grams of fiber from whole-grain cereal a day had a 30 percent lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes than women who ate less than 2.5 grams a day. Vitamins B6 and E along with folic acid, several minerals, antioxidants and phytochemicals give whole grains their "power." Experts believe three servings of whole-grain foods a day can make an impact.

A Great Start Toward Total Nutrition-A regular afternoon snack of a whole-grain cereal mixed with raisins or dried apricots, plus a glass of your favorite fruit juice gives you a great jumpstart toward better health. (See Table for other ideas.)

Brought to you by Total cereals, whole grain breakfast cereals with 100% of the daily value of at least 11 vitamins and minerals, including calcium *NAPS*

Fresh Coat of Paint for VVCC Ballroom

Visitacion Valley Community Center (VVCC) thanks the Eagle Scout troop from South San Francisco and the Tanaka family, who with their friends painted the Ballroom at 50 Raymond Ave. the weekend of July 12-14. They did a fabulous job, and made lots of friends at VVCC while they worked. This was a great group! Thanks so much, everybody!

Overvalued Dollar Threatens U.S. Paper Industry

The overvalued dollar is seriously affecting the U.S. forest products industry's global competitiveness, resulting in a loss of domestic marketshare, dramatically lowered exports, plant closings and job losses, say industry leaders.

"The dollar is overvalued by 25 to 30 percent, a 16-year high," says W. Henson Moore, President and CEO of the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA). "This is our number one issue, without question. It imposes a de facto tariff of 25 to 30 percent on U.S. producers selling into foreign markets, and enables foreign suppliers to outsell us in the domestic market."

He cites figures showing that from 1997 to 2000. U.S. consumption of paper and paperboard products grew by 3.5 million tons, but imports captured more than 90 percent of that growth. Moreover, the U.S. trade deficit in paper and paperboard products ballooned from $273 million in 1997 to $3.8 billion in 2001, he says.

Moore explains that his industry has not suffered alone. Since the middle of 2000, about 1.2 million jobs have been lost in manufacturing, and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) estimates that more than a third of these-500,000 jobs-were due to the drop in exports.

"The question we need to ask is, 'Does manufacturing in the U.S. have a future?'," says Boyd Young, President of the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy (PACE) Workers International Union. "If the answer is 'no', it will have a devastating impact on every aspect of our economy."

In the last five years, U.S. paper companies have closed 72 mills and lost more than 32,000 jobs. "Unless exchange rates are brought into line soon, and equilibrium is restored, the U.S. paper industry will not have the capacity to challenge our competitors and retake these lost markets," concludes Young.

AF&PA and PACE have been catalysts in forming a coalition that includes labor, agriculture and other manufacturing sectors to work on this issue.

Moore is calling on administration officials to adopt a public stance that the United States will not support an ever-higher value of the dollar beyond a sound level that is consistent with the economy's underlying competitiveness. He asks that the government work with our trading partners at the G-8 meetings in June to address trade and currency imbalances, as it did with the Plaza Accord of 1985, the last time the U.S. dollar was this misaligned.

To learn more about this issue, visit www.paceunion.org or www.afandpa.org.

Man Gunned Down Walking Near Sunnydale

A Visitacion Valley man walking home by the Sunnydale housing complex at 2 a.m. on July 13 was mistakenly shot by another resident hunting for an intruder. Andre Banks, 32 was pronounced dead at S.F. General Hospital two hours later by a man summoned to an adjacent relative's home following an attempted home invasion.

Tree Planting on Saturday, August 3

Please join us for a Visitacion Valley and Little Hollywood tree planting sponsored by Friends of the Urban Forest and Caltrans. We will be planting trees in front of your neighbor's homes, Visitacion Valley Greenway, Visitacion Valley Playground, and other locations.

Volunteers are needed to plant trees from 9 a.m. to noonish. You will learn about planting trees and food will be provided. RSVP with Bill Hart (415) 561-6890 ex 101.

ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

240 Leland Ave., San Francisco, CA 94134
The Rev. Dr. Jerry O. Resus, Minister

Church School Classes: 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Bible Study: 11:00 a.m.
Friday Bible Fellowship: 7:30 p.m.
Saturday Choir Rehersal: 10:00 a.m.

You are cordially welcome to join us for study, worship, fellowship and service. We seek to teach the Bible and to lift up Jesus Christ so He can draw all persons to Himself.

Come to Church This Week

Some Safety Tips For Safe Bicycling

Bicycling-one of the joys of childhood-is also a leading cause of visits to hospital emergency departments for kids ages 5 to 14, according to the Emergency Nurses Association. To help your kids cycle safely, start at the top, ENA advises, by insisting they always wear a helmet.

"Helmets won't prevent bike crashes, but they can prevent permanent brain injury and even save a child's life," explained Barbara Foley, Director, Emergency Nurses CARE (EN CARE), the Injury Prevention Institute of ENA. In fact, experts estimate that universal bicycle helmet use by children would prevent 39,000 to 45,000 head injuries and 18,000 to 55,000 scalp and face injuries annually. Yet only about 20 percent of bicyclists in the United States today wear helmets.

"Most bicycle fatalities involve head injuries," Foley said. "The fact is-helmets are more than 85 percent effective in preventing head and brain injuries, so it's tremendously important to wear a helmet and make sure it fits properly," she added.

In 2000, 738 bicyclists were killed and more than 50,000 injured in crashes with motor vehicles. Nearly one-third of those killed were children ages 15 and under.

"Emergency nurses see the devastating effects of preventable injuries every day in hospitals across the country-and that's why we are committed to trying to make a difference," Foley said.

Foley noted that a bike helmet habit learned early in life is more likely to carry over into teen and adult years, so kids should wear a helmet beginning with their first bike ride. Parents should set a good example by wearing a helmet as well. She added that young bicyclists, ages 14 and under, are at five times greater risk for injury than older cyclists.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety notes bicycle deaths are most likely to occur on Fridays and Saturdays in the summer. Peak hours for bike-related fatalities are 3-9 p.m.

The Emergency Nurses Association offers the following tips to cycle safely:

*Select a helmet that fits snugly and sits flat on the head.

*Check to see that the helmet has been tested and meets the uniform safety standard (CPSC and ASTM or Snell).

*Replace any helmet that has been in a crash or after five years.

*Begin the "helmet habit" with a child's first bike ride.

*Encourage other parents to insist on helmets.

*Allow children to choose their own helmet color, design and shape.

*Buy a bike that is the right size, not one to grow into.

*Bicycles are considered vehicles, so obey all traffic laws.

*Avoid riding at night. *NAPS*

Checking-Out Safety of Second-Hand Appliances

Cleaning often leads to yard sales and an overflow of unwanted appliances at thrift shops and in the classified ads. If you bring home one of these second-hand appliances, however, you may be getting more than you bargained for.

The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM) urges consumers to consider the following tips before purchasing a second-hand portable appliance:

1. Ask the age and working condition of the appliance you are about to purchase.

2. Check for frayed or damaged power supply cords, switches and parts.

3. Inspect for tampering and inquire about any repairs performed on the appliance.

4. Make sure all parts, including the owner's operating manual is included with the product. The owner's manual offers important performance and safety tips.

5. Has the appliance been the subject of a safety recall? Recall notices are available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (www.cpsc.gov). Remember to check back through the life of the appliance for recall notices.

If you're still in doubt after going through the above checklist, consider purchasing a new appliance. Those selling a second-hand product should also use these guidelines to determine if the unit should be sold, or simply discarded. For more information, visit www.aham.org. *NAPS*

How to Get the Right Tire at the Best Value

You don't have to wheel and deal to get the right tires at the best price. Just turn to these tire tips.

"When tire shopping, keep in mind that there is a difference between the lowest price and the best value," advises Erik Olsen, vice president, Michelin Americas Small Tires. He offers the following tips:

1. Know when to replace your tires. Even the best tires wear out with time, distance and a variety of weather and road conditions. One of the simplest ways to know when to replace tires is to check the tread depth. All tires have tread-wear indicator bars molded into the treads. When the tread is worn down to where you can see a solid bar of rubber across the width of the tread, it's time to replace the tire. You can also get help from Abraham Lincoln. Take a penny, and with Lincoln's head down, put it into the tread grooves. If you can clearly see all of Lincoln's head, the tread depth is low and you probably need new tires. Also, look for irregular tire wear and check for cuts, tears or bulges in the tire's sidewall.

2. Buy the right tire for your vehicle. Tires come in several types: Highway tires, designed for wet and dry weather driving but not for use on snow or ice; snow tires, which provide maximum traction in winter conditions: all-season tires, providing good balance for drivers looking for increased traction in rain and snow as well as the handling, ride and tread-wear benefits of a highway tire; and performance tires, focusing on better handling, grip and cornering. Next, make sure you buy the right size. Check the owner's manual or the vehicle placard located on the driver's door post, the fuel filler door or the glove compartment lid. Then, check the Uniform Tire Grade ratings, which provide key information about:

*Treadwear grades, which range from 60 to 620. The higher the grade, the longer the tread life.

*Traction grades AA to C, indicating a tire's braking performance. AA signifies the best traction.

*Temperature grades A to C, which represent a tire's ability to withstand heat. "A" signifies the most resistant.

3. Shop for the best value. Once you know the kind of tire you need, you can call or visit an experienced tire retailer such as Wal-Mart Tire & Lube Express. Be sure to ask for the total package price, which includes rotation and balancing over the life of the tire.

"New tires can improve the safety and comfort of your ride," says Ken Reese, director of operations for Wal-Mart's 1,500 Tire & Lube Express outlets across the United States. "And knowing that you've bought the right tire at the right price gives you an added dimension-peace of mind." *NAPS*

Knowing the Rules of Children and Fire

According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), 3,650 children under age 14 are killed or injured in residential fires each year.

More than half of the children who die in those fires are under age five and often too young to recognize, and help themselves in, an emergency. Also, children playing with fire start two out of every five fires that kill young children.

For these reasons, it is very important that parents and caregivers talk to children about fire dangers and take proper measures to ensure their homes are fire safe and that the whole family will be able to escape in case a fire does occur.

The U.S. Fire Administration offers the following fire safety tips for parents, caregivers and households with small children:

Preventing Fire

*Children are curious about fire. Keep matches, lighters and other ignitable materials in a secure place and out of their reach. Teach children the dangers of fire and not to play with it.

*Have your children tell you when they find matches and lighters.

*Check under beds and in closets for burnt matches-evidence that your child may be playing with fire.

*Replace mattresses made prior to the 1973 Federal Mattress Flammability Standard.

Escaping Fire

*Install and maintain a smoke alarm on every floor of your home and outside of sleeping areas.

Test the batteries monthly. Conventional smoke alarms require yearly battery changes, while lithium powered alarms may last up to ten years without a battery change. Whichever type is used, having working smoke alarms nearly doubles one's chance of surviving a fire.

*Familiarize children with the sound of your smoke alarms and what to do if one goes off: crawl under smoke, leave the building and go to a designated meeting place outside.

*Develop and practice a fire escape plan with your family. Identify two ways to escape from every room in your home.

*Firefighters may look scary to children. Teach them not to hide from firefighters in case of fire.

Preventing Burns

*Teach children how to stop, drop and roll to minimize burns if clothing ignites.

*Dress children in pajamas that meet federal flammability standards. Avoid loose-fitting 100 percent cotton garments, like oversized t-shirts as sleepwear.

The United States Fire Administration, an entity of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is the federal leader in the areas of public fire education and awareness, fire service training, fire-related technology and data collection.

For more information on children's fire safety or other fire safety topics, please write to the United States Fire Administration, Publications Office, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727 or visit www.usfa.fema.gov. *NAPS*

Kindergarten Orientation at "Little Vis"

Dinner was served to all preschool families in the VVES cafeteria.

Parents then attended a combined Kindergarten Orientation at VVES.

From Page 1

When VVES piloted a model program in 2001 working in partnership with Visitacion Valley Family School, John McLaren Child Development Center and other preschools, an important feature was an information exchange between preschool and Kindergarten teachers which helped the Kindergarten teachers become better informed and more efficient in working with the entering Kindergarten children. San Francisco Unified School District expanded the program this year to include the whole school district.

Easy to Find Child Passenger Safety Information

Car crashes are the number one killer of children. While not all vehicle crashes are survivable, many deaths and injuries can be prevented with the proper use of child safety seats. However, getting it right is not as easy as it seems.

"Ninety-seven percent of parents believe they always properly use and install their car seats," said Chuck Hurley, vice president, Transportation Safety Group, National Safety Council (NSC). "Unfortunately, the truth is at least eight out of every ten children riding in child safety seats are not properly buckled in. Don't take a chance. Have your child's car seat inspected."

Today, there are more than 3,000 sites nationwide where parents can go to get a free car seat inspection. Now finding the nearest location just got easier thanks to a new program called SEATCHECK. SEAT-CHECK is a comprehensive listing of child safety seat inspection locations and check-up events nationwide. It includes a toll-free hotline dedicated exclusively to directing parents to local car seat inspection resources (1-866-SEAT-CHECK or 1-866-732-8243). For those individuals who prefer to use the Internet, SEATCHECK includes a Web site, www.seatcheck.org, which complements the hotline. Both the hotline and Web site are available in both English and Spanish.

The Web site contains child passenger safety materials that are free, easily downloadable and may be used for educational purposes. In addition, the Web site allows child safety seat technicians and trainers to post information on upcoming SEATCHECK events.

SEATCHECK was launched in response to a survey of parents, which found that four out of ten parents and caregivers do not know how to find a child safety seat inspection location. The survey also found that use of a toll-free number is a parent's first choice method to find child passenger safety information. With telephone access available in 94 percent of households, the hotline will give nearly every family access to this lifesaving resource. *NAPS*

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Book Reviews

Computer Bloopers

Technology is common in today's workplace. But not everyone is an expert in using it, and that has led to some hilarious mix-ups and misunderstandings. A new book, chock full of such wild and crazy workplace stories, is sure to make even the most timid technophobe giggle.

Welcome to I.T. (CDW, $11.95) contains more than 120 humorous-and all too true-stories, puns, jokes and cartoons to make you grin, laugh, chuckle and groan.

The book was compiled by "Fred, the I.T. guy" after he was highlighted in a television advertising campaign from CDW, a leading provider of technology products and services to businesses and the public sector. As a result of his fame, Fred's trials and tribulations inspired people from across the country to share their true and sometimes outrageous technology stories.

Here's a sample of stories from the book:

Hall of Fame

*"The computer said DEBUG, so I sprayed it with bug spray and now it's not working. Should I have used a special brand?"

*One executive asked for the Internet to be reset.

*The Fat Laptop-"My laptop gets heavier each time the computer department installs new programs. Is there anything you can do to make my laptop lighter?"

*Someone sent out e-mail to tell co-workers the e-mail is down.

*Nosy Laptop: One individual believed the I.T. department could see her through her laptop's monitor when logged on at home.

Food Buffet

*Biscuits (found in a hard drive).

*Mashed potatoes and gravy (found jamming a printer).

"Double Meaning" Drawer

*"Does the firewall get hot?"

*"Is a mouse pad efficient mouse support?"

*"Why is it called a mouse? We should call it a frog instead."

Welcome to I.T. is available by calling CDW at 800-797-4239.

Visitacion Valley Elementary School Graduates Off to New Challenges

Kevin Tang received the Cheryl Hackett Award from fifth grade teacher Mrs. Connie Baker-Cohn (also known as Mrs. B.C.) This award was initiated in 1999 by a Visitation Valley neighbor to recognize and reward the most resilient student in each year's fifth grade class.

Soon-to-be sixth graders sang their farewell songs to the Little Vis audience.

Desarte Yamway, one of five volunteer student speakers, shared his experiences at Little Vis with the audience.

Supervisor Sophie Maxwell offered words of wisdom, cheers and encouragement to the graduates.

The Kindergarten children also celebrated their "cap and gown" graduation on June 13. Best of luck in meeting their new challenges in the future.

Visitation Valley Elementary School's (VVES) auditorium was packed with a *standing room only* crowd of proud parents and family members on June 14 as 76 VVES fifth graders were promoted to middle school.

Adding to the excitement of an event celebrating the accomplishments of the graduating students were encouragements provided by keynote speaker Sophie Maxwell, District 10 supervisor. Everyone wishes the best to these young people in their future academic and vocational pursuits.

The Best America

When New York Times bestselling author and award-winning columnist Bob Greene went searching for "the best America there ever was," he found it in North Platte, Nebraska, a small town where-60 years ago-a miracle happened in the form of a train station turned glorious and inspiring World War II beacon.

Greene's book, Once Upon A Town (William Morrow, $24.95) is the story of the miracle of the North Platte canteen. The canteen was started by women of all ages-teenage girls and their younger sisters, wives and mothers who'd sent their own husbands and sons to war-gathered from counties all over Nebraska with loads of provisions to greet the trains.

Homemade sandwiches, cakes, fresh fruit, coffee, candy, cigarettes, and magazines lined the counters inside the station, where soldiers received kind words, and maybe a dance as those who could played the piano and rallied the group in song. Bright young girls carried baskets to the trains for men who couldn't debark. And every group received a birthday cake. Overseas, men asked each other if they'd spent time in North Platte. On the way toward the town, seasoned soldiers told new men about the ritual: the sprint toward the station and 10 minutes later the dash back as the train began to roll.

Each day of the war, from five in the morning to midnight, the women served, replenishing the coffers with food and treats-homegrown, homebaked and supported by private donations, at a time when rationing and shortages were a way of life. Over six million soldiers passed through North Platte between 1941-45; some 8,000 each day toward the the end of the war..

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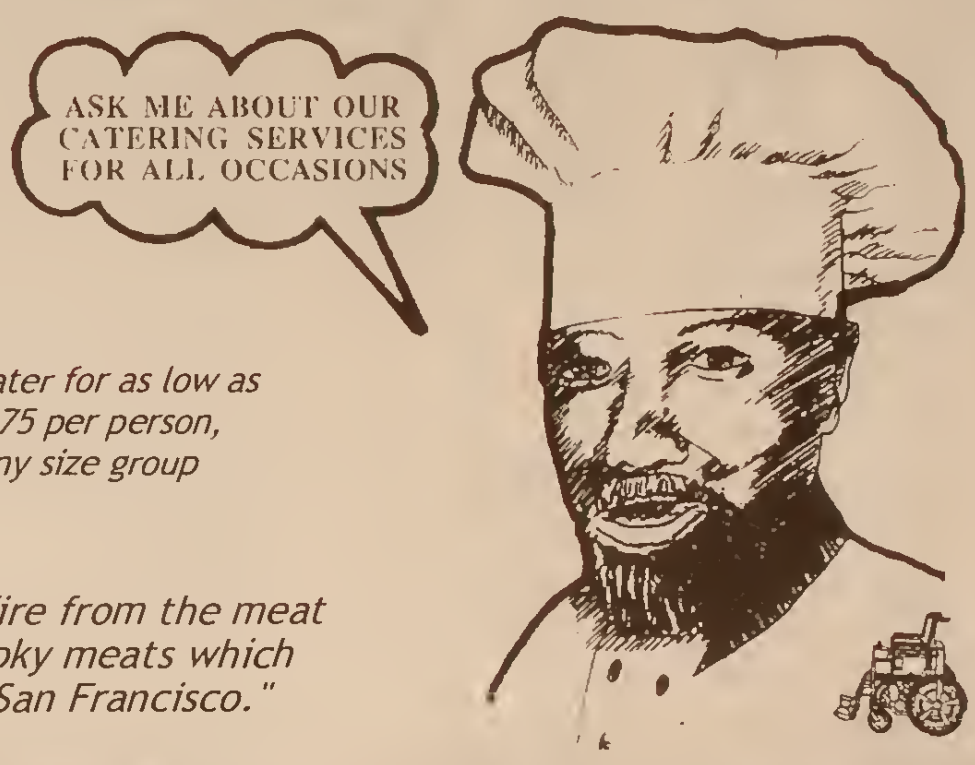

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Charlotte Sting	Indiana Fever	New York Liberty	Sacramento Monarchs
Cleveland Rockers	Los Angeles Sparks	Orlando Miracle	Seattle Storm
Detroit Shock	Miami Sol	Phoenix Mercury	Utah Starzz
Houston Comets	Minnesota Lynx	Portland Fire	Washington Mystics

Historic Proportions

Match clues to answers

2001

1. *Best Picture* at Academy Awards on Mar. 25.
2. Prime minister of Israel on Feb. 6.
3. Stanley Cup winners in NHL on June 9.
4. Football league disbanded after only one season.
5. Sworn in as the 43rd president of the United States on Jan. 20.
6. Large power company filed for bankruptcy on Dec. 2.
7. World terrorist became household name in September.
8. Terrorists attacked New York on Sept. 11.
9. U.S. invaded country in late September to fight terrorism.
10. Bacteria intentionally sent through mail in October.
11. Won Super Bowl 35 on Jan. 28.
12. Out of retirement and back in the NBA on Sept. 25.
13. World Series winners on Nov. 4.
14. Won Tour de France for third straight year on July 29.
15. Congressman linked to missing Washington intern.
16. NBA champions again on June 15.
17. Tropical storm hit Houston area in early June.
18. musical won 12 Tony awards on June 3.

A. The Producers
B. Michael Jordan
C. Baltimore Ravens
D. Osama bin Laden
E. Ariel Sharon
F. Lance Armstrong
G. Los Angeles Lakers
H. Gary Condit
I. Allison
J. Afghanistan
K. XFL
L. World Trade Center
M. Anthrax
N. Enron
O. Gladiator
P. Colorado Avalanche
Q. George W. Bush
R. Arizona Diamondbacks

Answers: 1-O; 2-E; 3-P; 4-K; 5-Q; 6-N; 7-D; 8-L; 9-J; 10-M; 11-C; 12-B; 13-R; 14-F; 15-; 16-G; 17-I; 18-A.

Five Years Ago In the Grapevine

AUGUST 1997

*With Geneva Towers slated for demolition, Visitacion Valley residents began circulating petitions asking their preference of either a wrecking ball or implosion to bring down the twin 20-story buildings.

*A child care center became part of a project in building more than 90 new units of senior housing on Raymond Avenue..

*With an Environmental Review application for a proposed Recycling and Solid Waste System Plan project at the facility on Tunnel Avenue withdrawn, Norcal began exploring Pier 80 to satisfy expansion needs.

*Signatures were gathered on a local petition in support of Bart Ribotta, popular senior swimming instructor at Coffman Pool, to keep him from being replaced.

*Visitacion Valley exceeded a projected goal in the S.F. Recycling Program and was awarded $1,000 for either an educational or recreational summer youth program.

Sez Who?

Match quotes to speakers

1. "Friendship is like money, easier made than kept."
2. "Observation is a passive science, experimentation an active science."
3. "Insanity is often the logic of an accurate mind overtasked."
4. "It is not the strength but the duration of great sentiments that make great men."
5. "A tough lesson in life that everyone has to learn is that not everyone wisshes you well."
6. "Hide not your talents, they for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?"
7. "The great secret of power is never to will to do more than you can accomplish."
8. "When your work speaks for itself, don't interupt."
9. "Life consists not in holding good cards, but in playing well those you do hold."

A. Claude Bernard
B. Dan Rather
C. Samuel Butler
D. Josh Billings
E. Henry J. Kaiser
F. Friedrich Nietzsche
G. Henrik Ibsen
H. Oliver Wendell Holmes
I. Benjamin Franklin

Answers: 1-C; 2-A; 3-H; 4-F; 5-B; 6-I; 7-G; 8-E; 9-D.

Sump, the Grump

Online Resource for Small Business Owners

Small-business owners now have an online resource where they can find valuable information that will help them drive down the cost of running a business and raising a family.

The Alliance for Affordable Services is a not-for-profit membership organization committed to helping small-business owners reduce expenses and improve their quality of life. On www.affordable services.org, owners can consult a variety of resources designed to help them grow professionally and personally. Visitors will also find timely articles and news that address their concerns.

The site features tips on marketing and running a successful family business as well as advice on Web site design and writing effective e-mails. Small-business owners with college-bound students can find guidance on securing scholarships. There's also information on legislative issues that affect the nation's small businesses, such as estate tax reform, health care reform, Social Security reform and the simplification of private pension rules.

On the site, visitors can also find out about membership in the Alliance. The organization offers its members a multitude of discounted products and services that address their professional, health and family needs.

For more information about the Alliance for Affordable Services, visit www.affordableservices.org or call Member Services at 1-800-733-2242. *NAPS*

They're Everywhere!

Phone Service

This week, my phone went dead and I had to contact the telephone repair people. They promised to be out between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. When I asked if they could give me a smaller time window, the pleasant gentleman asked, "Would you like us to call you before we come?" I replied that I didn't see how he would be able to do that, since our phones weren't working. He also requested that we report future outages by e-mail. I asked him, "Does your e-mail work without a telephone line?"

At Work

I was signing the receipt for my credit card purchase when the clerk noticed I had never signed my name on the back of the credit card. She informed me that she could not complete the transaction unless the card was signed.

When I asked why, she explained that it was necessary to compare the signature I had just signed on the receipt. So I signed the credit card in front of her. She carefully compared the signature to the one I had just signed on the receipt. As luck would have it, they matched.

In the Neighborhood

I live in a semi-rural area. We recently had a new neighbor call the local township administrative office to request the removal of the Deer Crossing sign on our road. The reason: "Too many deer were being hit by cars," and he didn't want them to cross there anymore.

Food Service

My daughter went to a local Taco Bell and ordered a taco. She asked the person behind the counter for "minimal lettuce." He said he was sorry, but they only had iceberg.

Airport Sighting:

I was at the airport, checking in at the gate when an airport employee asked, "Has anyone put anything in your baggage without your knowledge?" To which I replied, "If it was without my knowledge, how would I know? "He smiled knowingly and nodded, "That's why we ask."

Street Sighting

The stoplight on the corner buzzes when it's safe to cross the street. I was crossing with an intellectually challenged co-worker of mine when she asked if I knew what the buzzer was for. I explained that it signals blind people when the light is red. Appalled, she responded, "What on earth are blind people doing driving?!"

Sad Occasion

At a goodbye luncheon for an old and dear co-worker who was leaving the company due to "downsizing," our manager commented cheerfully, "This is fun. We should do this more often." Not a word was spoken. We all just looked at each other with that deer-in-the-headlights stare.

Sighting #1

I work with an individual who plugged her power strip back into itself and for the life of her couldn't understand why her system would not turn on.

Sighting #2:

When my husband and I arrived at an automobile dealership to pick up our car, we were told the keys had been locked in it. We went to the service department and found a mechanic working feverishly to unlock the driver's

side door. As I watched from the passenger side, I instinctively tried the door handle and discovered that it was unlocked. "Hey," I announced to the technician, "it's open!" To which he replied, "I know – I already got that side."

Now, don't you feel better??

Tales of a Travel Agent

*I had someone ask for an aisle seat so their hair wouldn't get messed up from being near the window.

*A client called in inquiring about a package to Hawaii. After going over all the cost info, she asked, "Would it be cheaper to fly to California and then take the train to Hawaii?"

*I got a call from a woman who wanted to go to Capetown. I started to explain the length of the flight and the passport information when she interrupted me with "I'm not trying to make you look stupid, but Capetown is in Massachusetts." Without trying to make her look like the stupid one, I calmly explained, "Cape Cod is in Massachusetts, Capetown is in Africa." Her response ... click.

*A man called, furious about a Florida package we did. I asked what was wrong with the vacation in Orlando. He said he was expecting an ocean-view room. I tried to explain that is not possible, since Orlando is in the middle of the state. He replied, "Don't lie to me. I looked on the map and Florida is a very thin state."

*I got a call from a man who asked, "Is it possible to see England from Canada?" I said, "No." He said, "But they look so close on the map."

*Another man called and asked if he could rent a car in Dallas. When I pulled up the reservation, I noticed he had a 1-hour layover in Dallas. When I asked him why he wanted to rent a car, he said, "I heard Dallas was a big airport, and I need a car to drive between the gates to save time."

*A nice lady just called. She needed to know how it was possible that her flight from Detroit left at 8:20a.m. and got into Chicago at 8:33am. I tried to explain that Michigan was an hour ahead of Illinois, but she could not understand the concept of time zones. Finally, I told her the plane went very fast, and she bought that!

*A woman called and asked, "Do airlines put your physical description on your bag so they know whose luggage belong to who?" I said, "No, why do you ask?" She replied, "Well, when I checked in with the airline, they put a tag on my luggage that said FAT, and I am overweight, is there any connection?" After putting her on hold for a minute while I looked in to it" (I was actually laughing) I came back and explained the city code for Fresno is FAT, and that the airline was just putting a destination tag on her luggage.

*I just got off the phone with a man who asked, "How do I know which plane to get on?" I asked him what exactly he meant, which he replied, "I was told my flight number is 823, but none of these darn planes have numbers on them."

*A woman called and said, "I need to fly to Pepsi-cola on one of those computer planes." I asked if she meant to fly to Pensacola on a commuter plane. She said, "Yeah, whatever."

*A businessman called and had a question about the documents he needed in order to fly to China. After a lengthy discussion about passports, I reminded him he needed a visa. "Oh no I don't, I've been to China many times and never had to have one of those." I double-checked and sure enough, his stay required a visa. When I told him this he said, "Look, I've been to China four times and every time they have accepted my American Express."

As a Matter of Fact

*The U.S. Automobile Association was formed in 1905. Its original mission was to provide "scouts" who would warn motorists of hidden police traps.

*In England and parts of America, it is believed by some that if your nose itches, you will become angry, see a stranger, kiss a fool or be in danger.

*Until 1796, the state of Tennessee was called Franklin.

*Many consumers believe honeydew melons get sweeter after they are picked. They were not introduced into the U.S. until about 1900.

*In 1882, David Jacks began shipping cheese from his dairies in Monterey, CA. Eventually, the cheese became known simply as Monterey Jack.

*Gregor Mendel, working with garden peas, established the first law of genetic heredity in 1865.

*The largest hamburger ever made weighed in at 5,520 pounds and was barbecued at the Outagamie County Fairgrounds in Seymour, Wisconsin in 1989.

*According to folklore, when a candle gives forth a spark, a letter is coming to the person sitting nearest it.

*Pluto, the furthest planet from the sun, was discovered by the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, AZ, in 1930.

*The spiral screwdriver, initially used to insert screws into wooden caskets. was patented by Isaac Allard in 1868.

*English engineer John Smeaton, inspired by construction methods of the ancient Romans, mixed lime and clay to create the basic form of cement we use today.

*The Brownie camera introduced by Kodak in 1900, was named after popular cartoon characters of the time. The tie-in was intended to help get children interested in photography.

*The only 15-letter word that can be spelled without repeating a letter is *uncopyrightable*

*The first real automobile, a cantilever-spring, tiller-steered vehicle, was built by Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybeck in 1886.

*Billfolds first came into fashion in America in 1890.

*According to Dutch merchants, during the 17th century the Chinese so valued the herb called sage that they would trade three chests of tea for one sage.

*Rubber gloves were first used during surgery at John Hopkins University in 1890.

*Taphephobia is the fear of being buried alive.

*The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds.

*Clinophobia is the fear of beds.

*The placement of a donkey's eyes in its head enables it to see all four feet at once.

*One ragweed plant can release as many as one billion grains of pollen.

*Every time you lick a stamp, you consume 1/10 of a calorie.

*New South Wales is Australia's oldest and most populous state.

*Porcupines float in water.

*The first magazine published in Esperanto was L'Amerika Esperantisto. It was published in October, 1906 at Oklahoma City.

*The story of the Three Little Pigs was introduced into English folklore in 1619.

*Predating the telephone, the first fax machine was created by Italian priest Giovanni Caselli in 1863.

*Vancouver Island is the largest island on the Pacific Coast of North America and is named for the British explorer George Vancouver.

*The first uniforms for letter carriers were authorized by Congress on July 27, 1868.

*London's Big Ben is named after Sir Benjamin Hall, the Chief Commissioner of Works when the bell was cast.

*Some people believed they could tell the future by opening a Bible and putting their finger down on a verse at random. The text thus pointed out was supposed to be applicable to the question at hand.

*The ballet, it's believed, was invented by Baltazarini, director of music to Catherine de Medici.

*A chaotic scene is sometimes referred to as *bedlam* from a 16th century madhouse of that name, set up in a former Priory of St. Mary of Bethlehem, bedlam being a corruption of Bethlehem.

Visitacion Valley Police Log

*June 8: 2:43 a.m., Brookdale & Blythdale Aves., grand theft purse snatch.

*June 8: 3 p.m., 200 block of Blythdale Ave., burglary of apartment house, forcible entry.

*June 9: 9:30 p.m., 200 block of Hahn St., robbery on street, strong-arm.

*June 9: 10 p.m., Wilde & San Bruno Aves., grand theft from locked auto.

*June 10: 4:04 p.m., Sunnydale Ave. & Peabody St., attempted robbery on street with bodily force.

*June 11: 4 a.m., 900 block of Rutland St., burglary of residence, forcible entry.

*June 11: 5:10 a.m., 1800 block of Sunnydale Ave., burglary, hot prowl, forcible entry.

*June 11: 10:53 a.m., 200 block of Blythdale Ave., burglary of apartment house, forcible entry.

*June 11: 9:15 p.m., 000 block of Ankeny St., grand theft from locked auto.

*June 13: 9:30 a.m., 400 block of Raymond Ave., grand theft from locked auto.

*June 13: 5:30 p.m., 200 block of Velasco Ave., burglary of warehouse, forcible entry.

*June 17: 12:01 a.m., 400 block of Raymond Ave., burglary of residence, forcible entry.

*June 18: 7:30 a.m., 200 block of Sawyer St., robbery on street, strong-arm.

*June 18: 8 p.m., 000 block of Brookdale Ave, robbery of residence with gun.

*June 19: 10:30 a.m., 000 block of Peabody St., grand theft, purse snatch.

*June 20: 10:30 a.m., 200 block of Blythdale Ave., burglary of residence, forcible entry.

*June 22: 6:45 p.m., 2200 block of Bayshore Blvd., grand theft from locked auto.

*June 23: 10:30 p.m., 000 block of Blythdale Ave., carjacking with dangerous weapon.

*June 26: 8 a.m., 000 block of Kelloch Ave., burglary of apartment house, unlawful entry.

*June 27: 4 a.m., Mansell & Hamilton Sts., robbery, bodily force.

*June 27: 4:30 a.m., 200 block of Teddy Ave., aggravated assault with deadly weapon.

*June 27: 3:30 p.m., 300 block of Velasco Ave., grand theft from locked auto.

*June 27: 7:30 p.m., 1700 block of Visitacion Ave., burglary, attempted forcible entry.

*June 27: 9:45 p.m., 000 block of Santos St., attempted homicide with gun.

*June 28: 12:15 p.m., 000 block of Schwerin St., grand theft from locked auto.

*June 28: 10:45 p.m., 100 block of Blythdale Ave., aggravated assault with deadly weapon.

*June 29: 12"3- a.m., Garrison Ave. & Schwerin St., aggravated assault with deadly weapon.

*June 29: 5:50 p.m., Visitacion Ave. & Sawyer St., grand theft purse snatch.

*June 30: 7 a.m., 000 block of Brookdale Ave., burglary of apartment house, unlawful entry.

*July 1: 11:15 a.m., 2200 block of Geneva Ave., grand theft from person.

*July 2: 2:30 p.m., Rey St. & Visitaicon Ave., robbery on street, strongarm.

*July 2: 3:19 p.m., Schwerin St. & Visitacion Ave., robbery, bodily force.

*July 2: 6:15 p.m., 100 block of Blythdale Ave., aggravated assault with deadly weapon.

*July 2: 7 p.m., 100 block of Britton St., burglary of apartment house, unlawful entry.

*July 3: 10:30 a.m., 1400 block of Sunnydale Ave., robbery, armed with gun.

*July 3: 10:15 a.m., 200 block of Brookdale Ave., grand theft from locked auto.

*July 4: 5:05 a.m., 100 block of Santos St., aggravated assault with knife.

State's Aggressive Steps Against Sex Offenders

by CA Attorney General Bill Lockyer

There are few more abhorrent crimes than sexual assault. Children have even been taken from their own homes and neighborhoods by sex offenders determined to commit their heinous crimes.

Because sexual offenders are so often repeat offenders, California is continuing to take aggressive steps to prevent the horror of sexual assault before offenders can find their next victim. Parents and neighbors should be able to determine whether a sex offender is in their neighborhood.

California's Megan's Law, enacted in 1996, allows the public access to information on the identities and whereabouts of the state's "serious" and "high risk" registered sex offenders. Of the 95,000 registered sex offenders in California, 78,000 are considered "serious" or "high risk."

In March of this year, California's Megan's Law system began providing law enforcement agencies with daily updates on the identity and whereabouts of registered sexual offenders. The new web-enabled application replaces a CD-ROM produced by the Attorney General's Office, which had been distributed to law enforcement monthly.

Californians looking up sex offenders in their communities will now see information gathered the previous day. Together with a new law that requires sex offenders to provide new photographs of themselves each year, the updates will make it more difficult for registered sex offenders to hide.

The information is available in three ways: Police and sheriff's departments may notify residents of especially dangerous nearby sex offenders; individuals may call (900) 448-3000; or people may view the information at a law enforcement agency.

The new technology also makes Megan's Law information available in 12 additional languages: Arabic, Armenian, Cambodian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Since Megan's Law was implemented, law enforcement agencies have disclosed information on more than 3,500 sex offenders, more than 80,000 searches have been conducted using the 900 phone line, and more than 100,000 people have viewed the CD-ROM under the supervision of law enforcement officers.

Two new laws also take effect this year that will further improve law enforcement's ability to protect the public from sex offenders. Beginning January 1 of this year, specified sex offenders are required to annually, instead of only upon first registering, update important information, including: the license plate of any vehicle owned by or registered to the offender, fingerprints and a current photograph.

Also, beginning October 28 of this year, sex offenders attending classes, participating in programs or working on college campuses will be required to register with the campus police department in addition to registering with the police or sheriff's department in the community in which they live. If a campus does not have a police department, those offenders will be required to register with the police or sheriff's department that has jurisdiction over that campus.

A keen awareness of the people around our families and neighborhoods can help prevent sexual assaults. For further information on California's Megan's Law, please call Margaret Moore, Manager, Sex Offender Tracking Program, California Department of Justice, at (916) 227-3506.

Saturdays are Special at Randall Museum

The Randall Museum offers drop-in, hands-on art and science workshops every Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. at 199 Museum Way (off Roosevelt, above the Castro).

All ages are welcome; under 8 must be accompanied by an adult.

Museum admission is free with $3 per person workshop fee. Call 554-9600 for further information.

*Aug. 3: Sculpt a *mini bag* out of modeling clay.

*Aug. 10 Fabricate your own insect *pop-up puppet*.

*Aug. 17: Using stamps, pictures and paper, create a *bug collage*

*Aug. 24: Make a *bug mask* and fashion a fun new fall look for your face.

*Aug. 31: Create colorful *butterflies* complete with probascis.

Other regular Saturday activities include:

*Golden Gate Model Railroad Exhibit from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

*Meet the Animals from 11:15 a.m. to 12 noon.

*Animal Feeding at 12 noon.

Senior Bingo

12:30 p.m. Every Tuesday, at Visitacion Valley Senior Center, 66 Raymond Ave. Come Join the Fun!!

Governments Failing To Fill Housing Gap

From Page 1

On the *Honor Roll* were: Berkeley, East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, Petaluma, San Jose, Santa Clara, and Sunnyvale.

Rating *Good* were: Mountain View, Napa, Sonoma County, and Vacaville.

Found to be needing improvement were: Concord, Contra Costa County, Cupertino, Milpitas, San Mateo, and San Ramon.

Given a failing grade were: Alameda County, Brentwood, Daly City, Fairfield, Fremont, Hayward, Pittsburg, Redwood City, Santa Rosa, Vallejo, and Walnut Creek.

Some grades were updated since report print date.

Housing plans not available as of May 1 included those from San Francisco, as well as Alameda, Antioch, Dublin, Livermore, Novato, Oakland, Pleasanton, Richmond, San Leandro, San Rafael, and Solano County.

The 28-page report is available from NPH www.nonprofithousing.org and Greenbelt Alliance www.greenbelt.org.

The Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California works to advance affordable housing as the foundation for thriving individuals, families and neighborhoods. Greenbelt Alliance is the Bay Area's leading land conservation and urban planning non-profit. Its mission is to make the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area a better place to live by protecting the region's Greenbelt and improving the livability of its cities and towns.

Grapevine Want Ads

VOLUNTEERS WANTED for VVCC After School Program to tutor children ages 5-14 at one of our 11 sites in the Visitacion Valley area. Interested persons contact Dee Smith, VVCC After School coordinator, (415) 585-2059

A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY. The John McLaren Child Development Center seeks in-kind donations for our newly-created lending library: children's books and magazines; small children's furniture, writing and/or art supplies, educational/cultural games or posters. Thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity! Please send all donations to: John McLaren Child Development Center, 2055 Sunnydale Ave., San Francisco, CA 94134. Call 469-4519 if you would like for us to pick-up any materials.

BEEN THERE...DONE THAT! The Visitacion Valley Jobs, Education and Training Program (across from the site of the recently demolished Geneva Towers) is accepting TANF and GA clients for "Welfare to Work--Job Readiness Training." Classes are conducted by sensitive community trainers from Visitacion Valley. Got issues? No problem! We'll solve them together as you reach for your own self-sufficiency. Feel comfortable while you're trying to sell yourself into today's labor market. Contact Ann or Mary at (415) 239-2866 or 239-2877.

GRAPEVINE 15TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE featuring a 10-page history of Visitacion Valley is still available in limited amount. Contact the Grapevine at 467-9300. By mail, single copies are $1 each. Send to: Visitacion Valley Grapevine, 50 Raymond Ave., San Francisco, CA 94134.

GRAPEVINE DISPLAY ADVERTISING now half off regular rates for a limited time. Full Page $75, 1/2 Page $40; 1/4 Page $22.50; 1/8 Page $12.50; 1/12 Page $7.50. Discount for three or more insertions. Call (415) 467-9300 for more details. ***Want Ads:*** 20 words for $1. Extra line 50 cents. Ad and payment should be received by 20th of prior month at Visitacion Valley Grapevine, 50 Raymond Ave., San Francisco, CA 94134.

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San Francisco City Meetings

Aging 1st Wed 9:30a; Airport 1st/3rd Tu 3p, Arts 1st Mon 3p, Education 2 nd/4th Tu 7p; Health 1st/3rd Tu 3p; Housing Auth. 2nd/4th Th 4p; Human Rights 1st/3rd Th 4:30p, Library 1st Tu 5:30p, Planning Th 1:30p; Police Wed 5:30p, Port 1st Tu/3rd Wed 4:30p; Public Utilities 2nd/4th Tu 2p; Rec & Park 3rd Th 2p, Social Services 4th Th 9a; Status Women 4th Th 4p; Supervisors Mon 2p

Visitacion Valley Community Center

Mondays: Senior Shopping 11:30 a.m.; Tuesdays: Senior Ceramics 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Senior Bingo 12:30 p.m., **Thursdays:** Sewing Class 9 a.m.-3 p.m. VVCC **Regular Board Meeting** is held on the 4th Thursday of each month at 5 p.m. (except for May 2002 when held on the 2nd Saturday).

San Francisco City Services

ABANDONED CARS	781-JUNK
ANIMAL CONTROL	554-6364
BUS SHELTER DAMAGE	882-4949
CITY TREES (trimming)	695-2162
CRIME-STOPPERS (anonymous)	1-800-2GIVEINFO
DOMESTIC/FAMILY VIOLENCE	864-4722
DPW (days)	695-2017, (nights/weekends) 895-2020
EMERGENCY SERVICES	9-1-1
EMERGENCY SERVICES (cell-phone)	553-8090
GARBAGE SERVICE COMPLAINTS	255-3610
GRAFFITI CLEANUP (DPW)	241-WASH
GRAFFITI SUSPECT INFO	553-1603
INGLESIDE STATION (Anonymous 333-3433)	553-1603
LELAND AVENUE RESOURCE CENTER	585-2675
MAYOR'S OFFICE	554-7111
MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES	554-6110
NARCOTICS TIP LINE (anonymous)	1-800-CRACKIT
PARKING AND TRAFFIC PROBLEMS (DPT)	553-1200
POLICE (non-emergency)	553-0123
POTHOLE REPAIR	695-2100
SAFE (neighborhood watch groups)	673-SAFE
STREET LIGHTING CITY (out of order)	554-0730
STREET LIGHTING PG&E (wood poles)	693-3201
SUNNYDALE RESOURCE CENTER	586-7572
TRAFFIC SIGNALS (out of order)	550-2736
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING	554-2300
VVMS ANNONYMOUS HOTLINE	281-8406

Visitacion Valley Business Directory

Valley business and organization free listings in the 415 area code. Call the Grapevine at (415) 467-9300

AQUARIUMS
ASIAN DISCUS AQUARIUM, 130 Leland Ave., 333-0772

AUTOMOTIVE
BAYSHORE AUTO, 2260 Bayshore Blvd., 467-6130
BAYSHORE SERVICE (mechanic) 2596 Bayshore Blvd., 239-5239
CHARLIE'S GARAGE (Charlie Awegh), 2550 Bayshore Blvd., 239-7450
T.W AUTOMOTIVE (mechanic), 2500 Bayshore Blvd., 585-8281
VALLEY AUTO & TRUCK SUPPLY (Bill Conte), 2520 Bayshore Blvd., 239-5880

BANK
BANK OF AMERICA, 6 Leland Ave., 622-4501

BAKERS
CUNEO BAKERY, 96 Leland Ave., 239-6090
LITTLE QUIAPO BAKE SHOP, 169 Leland Ave., 239-2253

BARBERS
DeMASI'S BARBER SHOP, 35 Leland Ave
THE SHOP (JB), 178 Leland Ave., 239-6709

BEAUTICIANS
ANGEL COIFFURES, 5 Leland Ave., 239-9891
MAY MAY BEAUTY SALON, 60 Leland Ave., 337-9381
MIZ RENA'S SALON, 19 Blanken Ave., 467-3399
NAILS BY JENNY, 50 Leland Ave., 333-6800
WHO'S BADO, 224 Leland Ave., 657-3156

BLIND CLEANING
SPEEDY ULTRASONIC BLIND CLEANING (commercial and residential), 1116 Girard St., 467-7506

BOARDING HOUSE
ABLE'S CASA, 850 Rutland St., 333-4664, fax 333-4693

BOOKKEEPERS
AMY ARAGON, PROFESSIONAL BOOKKEEPER, 467-8927
VERNA WALLACE E.A., 2320 Bayshore Blvd., 239-5333

CARPETS
HANSAN INTERIORS, 41 Leland Ave., 333-6382

CASKETS
CASKETORIUM, INC., 93 Leland Ave., 585-3451, Cell 722-8500

CHURCHES
CHURCH OF THE VISITACION, 655 Sunnydale Ave., 239-5950
IGLESIA EL ESPIRITU SANTO, 38 Leland Ave.
KOREAN FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 333 Tunnel Ave., 468-1213
RIDGE VIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 590 Leland Ave., 239-5457
ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 240 Leland Ave., 586-6381
VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH, 305 Raymond Ave., 467-6055
VISITACION CHINESE BAPTIST CHURCH, 8 Desmond St., 333-4503

CLOTHING
SPONA, 9 Leland Ave., 239-9631

COFFEE HOUSE
HAPPY DONUT, 2600 Bayshore Blvd., 469-5309

DAY CARE
CAROUSEL DAY CARE, 261 Hahn St., 469-5353

DENTIST
VISITACION VALLEY DENTAL OFFICE (Albert Kuan, DDS), 37 Leland Ave., 239-5500

DEVELOPERS
GENEVA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT CORP., 333 Schwerin St., 587-7895

ELECTRICAL
TATE ELECTRIC (Joel Tate), 467-4657

FLORISTS
IL FIORE FLOWERS, 2466 San Bruno Ave. 468-0145

GARDEN ORNAMENTS
SILVESTRI GARDEN ORNAMENTS, 2635 Bayshore Blvd., 239-5990

GROCERS
E-Z STOP MARKET, 2203 Geneva Ave., 585-9240
FIVE MILE MARKET, 3574 San Bruno Ave., 467-7300
K.C. MARKET, 400 Wilde St., 467-3024
LITTLE VILLAGE MARKET, 1450 Sunnydale Ave., 586-1815
M & M SHORTSTOP, 2145 Geneva Ave., 585-0878
PICCOLO PETE, 2155 Bayshore Blvd., 468-6800
SARI-SARI FOOD STORE, 58 Leland Ave., 239-0580
7-11, 2200 Bayshore Blvd., 468-8646
SHUN LEE MARKET, 2400 Bayshore Blvd., 586-4851
SMITTY'S MARKET, 2610 Bayshore Blvd., 239-5506
SUPER FAIR MARKET, 201 Leland Ave., 239-6856
TEDDY'S MARKET, 298 Teddy Ave
VALLEY SUPER MARKET, 65 Leland Ave., 239-7520

HERBS
KWOK HONG CHINESE HERBS, 57 Leland Ave, 585-8751
SAN ON HERBS, 33-A Leland Ave. 333-7469

HYPNOTHERAPY
VALERIE HABEGGER-HYPNOTHERAPY, 371 Teddy Ave., 468-5631

INSURANCE
ROBERT LEHMAN, CLTC, CMFC, 333-0850

KITCHEN CABINETS
LEE CHANG INTERNATIONAL, INC., 25 Leland Ave., 333-2730, fax 333-1706

LAUNDRY/CLEANERS
BAY WASH, 44 Leland Ave
CITY WASH INTERNATIONAL, 83 Leland Ave., 333-9467
COIN WASH & DRY LAUNDRY, 186 Leland Ave.
FORTY-NINER CLEANERS (David Chan), 51 Leland Ave., 239-6418
LELAND AVENUE CLEANERS, 151 Leland Ave., 586-1412
VALLEY LAUNDRY, 90 Leland Ave
VISITACION VALLEY LAUNDRY, 108 Leland Ave., 239-9030

LEARNING
3-N-1 LEARNING ACADEMY, 240 Leland Ave., 584-8555
VISITACION VALLEY COMMUNITY BEACON CENTER, 450 Raymond Ave., 452-4907
VISITACION VALLEY FAMILY SCHOOL, 325 Leland Ave., 585-9320

LIBRARY
VISITACION VALLEY BRANCH, 45 Leland Ave., 239-5270

LODGING
THRIFTLODGE, 2011 Bayshore Blvd., 467-8811

MANUFACTURER
NATIONWIDE PAPER, 345 Schwerin St., 586-9160

MEDICAL
AMERICAN RED CROSS, BAY AREA CHAPTER, 1704 Sunnydale Ave., 584-3620
HAWKINS VILLAGE MEDICAL CLINIC (Dept. of Public Health), 333 Schwerin St., Appointments 715-0310
DR. SAM HO, MD, 9 Silliman St. No. 4, 337-6135
NORTH EAST MEDICAL SERVICES, LELAND AVENUE, 82 Leland Ave., 391-9686 (ask for Leland Avenue clinic)
PORTOLA FOOT & ANKLE CLINIC (Dr. Divyang Patel) 2858 San Bruno Ave. 467-7500

NOTARY
ROYAL PACIFIC MORTGAGE & REALTY, 46 Leland Ave., 333-4900

ORGANIZATIONS
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER, 2442 Bayshore Blvd., 587-2689
GENEVA TERRACE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION, 60 Burr Ave., 584-2700
GIRLS AFTER SCHOOL ACADEMY, 2050 Sunnydale Ave., 333 Schwerin St., 584-4044
JOHN KING SENIOR COMMUNITY, 500 Raymond Ave., 239-6233
LELAND HOUSE, 141 Leland Ave., 405-2000
SENIOR CENTRAL DISTRICT 7, 66 Raymond Ave., 330-1789
VISITACION VALLEY SENIOR CENTER, 66 Raymond Ave., 467-4499

PHARMACY
VISITACION VALLEY PHARMACY, 100 Leland Ave., 239-5811

PHOTOGRAPHER
WALTER CORBIN PHOTOGRAPHY (freelance), 435 Sawyer St., 587-9471, fax 337-8620

PLUMBING
MARK VOELKER PLUMBING, 99 Arleta Ave., 467-7401

POST OFFICE
VISITACION USPO, 68 Leland Ave., (800) 275-8777

REAL ESTATE
CAMERON-JONES, INC (Cathy Kline Saunders), 334-0800

RESTAURANTS
CLIFF'S BAR-B-Q & SEAFOOD, 2177 Bayshore Blvd. 330-0736, Fax 330-9813
G & L BAKERY & RESTAURANT, 198 Leland Ave., 239-6283
HONG YUN RESTAURANT, 73 Leland Ave., 469-5686
SUN FAI RESTAURANT, 30 Leland Ave., 587-2763
LUAN FAT BAKERY, 110 Leland Ave., 585-1167
RUSSIA HOUSE, 2011 Bayshore Blvd., 467-0252
SHIREL'S SOUL FOOD, 107 Leland Ave., 239-5141
TWO JACK'S RESTAURANT (seafood and burgers), 167 Leland Ave., 337-0433

SELF-DEVELOPMENT
DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENTS (Marjone Ann Williams, CEO, Career and Self-Enhancements Specialist) 467-7608

SERVICE PROVIDERS
THE VILLAGE, 333 Schwerin St., 239-5045
VISITACION VALLEY BILINGUAL EDUCATION, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES & TRAINING (VVBESST), 120 Leland Ave., 586-7347
VISITACION VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER (VVCC), 50 Raymond Ave., 467-6400
VVCC CHILDREN'S PROGRAM, 161 Leland Ave., 586-6998, Fax 586-8027
VISITACION VALLEY JOBS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VVJET), 333 Schwenn St., 239-2866

SIGNS
SMITH'S SIGNS, 153 Leland Ave., 333-2700

TAVERN
THE CLUB HOUSE, 25 Blanken Ave

VIDEO
SIN FUNG VIDEO, 144 Leland Ave., 586-1038

Student Talent Show at "Little Vis"

Soyhala, Denise, Abigail, Shardae and Chioma performed an interesting song and dance number to "Foolish" by Ashanti

"Thrusting Spears and Mountain Meets River" was a karate performance by Teddy Dela Cruz.

Desarte, Desirae, Sharne and Jocelyn did a song and dance to "Take Ya Home" by Li'l Bow Wow.

During the final week of school in June, students of Visitacion Valley Elementary School (VVES) held their second annual *Talent Show* in the VVES auditorium. Always a popular event, a large number of parents and family members attended to see the students proudly display their many talents in performing arts on stage.

SLUG Offering Gardening Classes in August

**Summer Pruning*, Saturday, Aug. 3, 10 a.m.-1p.m. Gain hands-on pruning experience and learn tips and techniques for summertime (de-invigorating) pruning for a variety of shrubs, vines, and trees. Bring sharp pruning tools if you have them. Garden for the Environment, 7th Ave. and Lawton St. $10 SLUG members, $15 non-members.

**Cobb Bench Building*, Saturday, Aug. 17, 1-4 p.m. Natural earth builders, Raul Cavazos and Ryan Meyers, demonstrate building an outdoor bench utilizing all natural materials. Learn how to combine sand, straw, clay and a little elbow grease for a lovely and enjoyable outdoor seat. $10 SLUG members, $15 non-members.

**Herbs for Health and Hearth*, Aug. 17, 10 a.m. -12 noon. Cure what ails you and create savory meals by growing herbs in your garden, or on your windowsill. Herbs add spice to your life and are remarkably easy to grow. Call (415) 285-7584 to register. $5 SLUG members, $10 non-members.

McLaren Park Grass Fire

Firefighters moved swiftly to extinguish a 15-acre grass fire in McLaren Park on July 9.

Can You Recognize a Business Opportunity Fraud?

A Maryland couple paid $35,000 for a vending machine business opportunity on the promise they could net $7,500 a month. They got a list of 25 business locations where they could place their machines. But when they tried to deliver the machines, none of the businesses wanted them. Six months after investing their money, the couple had yet to make $50.

A Michigan man invested more than $20,000 in an offer involving display racks of current music stars' CDs and tapes, but he didn't get the promised products. Instead, he got CDs and tapes of music from the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Many of the CDs appeared to be "used."

Another man invested more than $10,000 in an opportunity in Florida involving candy machines. He found that the glass carousels on the machines didn't allow the candy to stay fresh: it melted, cracked or turned to powder.

Every year, thousands of consumers across the nation fall prey to fraudulent business opportunity promoters, even though many potential entrepreneurs are diligent about meeting with the promoters, checking references and verifying the business' legal status before they pay any money. Indeed, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) says that fraudulent business opportunities consistently rank in the top 10 categories in the FTC's database of consumer fraud complaints.

"Some scam artists are really sophisticated," says Dan Salsburg, an attorney for the FTC. "They know exactly how to keep consumers from guessing the true nature of their business, by rounding up phony references or creating misleading documents."

But while the scams can be difficult to detect, Salsburg says there are tell-tale signs of fraud that a savvy consumer can learn to spot. For example, many fraudulent promoters use the classified sections of newspapers and magazines to advertise the so-called opportunities. Many offers show up as spam email or in Internet ads. The ads typically involve vending machines for candy, soda, snacks or personal care items; display racks for greeting cards, compact discs, perfume or similar items; or opportunities to buy into medical billing or envelope stuffing businesses or activities related to the Internet.

Other tip-offs to fraud include claims of high pay in a short period of time (weeks or months) for little effort ("work only hours a week"), and claims about ideal work conditions, like the ability to "set your own hours," "be your own boss," or "work from home." The opportunities may sell for several hundred dollars to tens of thousands, Salsburg says, with the average cost about $5,000.

According to the FTC, many business opportunities offered through the classifieds or via spam email are "phantom" opportunities that have little chance of success - for example, a business with little or no demand in the market; cheap, low-quality or out-dated merchandise; poor customer service; and few, if any, locations. The locations that are offered often get little customer traffic.

So what's a consumer to do? The FTC says it's critical for consumers interested in buying a business opportunity to know their rights. For example, the FTC's Franchise Rule requires most business opportunity promoters to provide certain kinds of information. Says Salsburg: "Consumers should know to look for the information. If it's not there, the opportunity isn't worth pursuing."

The Franchise Rule

The FTC Franchise Rule is designed to protect would-he business owners from abuses by fraudulent promoters. The Rule requires promoters of business opportunities that sell $500 or more to provide prospective buyers with certain information. For example, if the promoter claims - even in an ad - that buyers can make a certain amount of money, the number and percentage of previous purchasers who achieved that level of earnings must be included.

Promoters also must provide a franchise disclosure document that includes basic information about the promoter's company, including whether it has faced any lawsuits from purchasers or lawsuits alleging fraud. In addition, the promoter must give potential purchasers the names, addresses and phone numbers of at least 10 previous purchasers who live closest to the potential buyer.

If you're interested in pursuing a business opportunity, the FTC advises you to:

*Look at the ad. If it includes an earnings claim - but not the number and percentage of people who achieved it – the business opportunity seller is probably violating the law.

*Search the business opportunity's franchise disclosure document for a statement about previous purchasers. If the document says there haven't been any previous purchasers but the seller offers a list of references, be skeptical: the references probably are phonies.

*Get the list of 10 previous purchasers and interview each in person, preferably where their business operates. This can help reduce the chances of being misled by phony references.

Even if the business opportunity sells for less than $500 and is not required to provide this information, Salsburg advises consumers to get it anyway - in writing. And, the FTC attorney says, "take your time. Promoters of fraudulent business opportunities often use high-pressure sales tactics to get you to buy in. But if the business opportunity is legitimate, it'll be around when you're ready to decide."

Other Preventive Measures

Additional tips from the FTC:

If the business opportunity involves selling products from a well-known company, call the legal department of the company whose merchandise you would be selling. Find out whether the promoter is affiliated with the company, and ask whether the company has ever threatened trademark action against this promoter or others.

Consult an attorney, accountant or other business advisor before you sign any papers or pay any money. If the promoter requires a deposit, ask your attorney to establish an escrow account until you close the deal.

Contact the attorney general's office, state or county consumer protection agency and Better Business Bureau, both where the business opportunity promoter is based and where you live, to find out whether there is any record of unresolved complaints. While a complaint record may indicate questionable business practices, a lack of complaints doesn't necessarily mean that the promoter and the business opportunity don't have problems. Unscrupulous dealers will change names and locations to hide a history of complaints.

Reporting Possible Fraud

If you suspect a business opportunity promotion is fraudulent, report it to:

*The FTC. File a complaint online at www.ftc.gov or call toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357).

* the state attorney general's office where you live and where the business opportunity promoter is based.

*Your county or state consumer protection agency. Check the blue pages of the phone book under county and state government.

*The Better Business Bureau in your community and where the promoter is based.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit www.ftc.gov or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

Veterans Affairs Q&As

Q: What is the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program for veterans?

A: VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program helps veterans with service-connected disabilities by offering them services and assistance to help them prepare for, find, and keep suitable employment. For veterans with a service-connected disability, VA also offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible.

Q: What type of services can I receive in this program?

A: With your help and active participation, VA will work with you to develop an individualized plan for gaining suitable employment. Vocational rehabilitation services include evaluation of your abilities, skills, and interests; vocational counseling and planning; assistance finding and keeping a suitable job, including special employer incentives; and, if needed, training such as on-the-job and non-paid work experiences. Also, if needed, services may include training, such as certificate, two, or four-year college programs, as well as supportive rehabilitation services and additional counseling.

Q: How does VA define what is meant by a suitable job?

A: To be suitable, a job must meet two standards. It must be within your physical and emotional capabilities and it must match your pattern of skills, talents, and interests. VA tries to be realistic. Every job is not for everyone and VA does not want to get you just any job. VA wants to you find a career that truly fits in with your unique circumstances, limitations, and talents. VA works closely with other partners, like the U.S. Department of Labor, to ensure that there is a need in the job market that matches your employment goal.

Q: How can I find out if my VA disability and employment handicap make me eligible for services under this program?

A: For more information about the program, you may contact the VA at 800-827-1000. Additional information is available at VA's Web site at www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/. You may also fill out an application online or download a benefits application.

Crude Oil, Other Factors Affect Gasoline Prices

Gasoline prices are headed in their usual direction again-up and down.

While consumer goods are constantly bouncing up and down...and for the most part, up, rarely do prices for everyday products rise and fall as drastically as they do for gasoline. How can the price drop 10 percent one month and rise 20 percent the next?

The truth is that a wide variety of factors impact the price of gasoline-including international crises, changing environmental regulations, supply and demand, local taxes and competition. All of these factors can move costs upward or downward, ultimately affecting the price of gasoline for motorists.

Even when crude oil prices are stable, gasoline prices rise or fall due to consumer demand. In the United States, more people take to the nation's roads during the warm weather months. Therefore, demand for gasoline is about five percent higher during the summer, causing prices to rise about 3.5 cents per gallon on average, even after correcting for changes in crude oil prices.

Gasoline may also be less expensive one summer versus another depending on how plentiful supplies are in a given year.

As anyone who's ever taken a cross-country car trip knows, gasoline prices can vary drastically from state to state. This is sometimes due to differences in state and local taxes, which can account for more than 20 percent of gasoline prices (part of the 34 percent average tax rate nationwide).

Aside from taxes, a region's proximity to gasoline supplies also affects cost. Areas farthest from the Gulf Coast-the source of almost half the gasoline produced in the United States-tend to have higher gasoline prices. In some regions, prices are also impacted by environmental regulations that require specially formulated gasolines, which can raise prices another 10 cents or more per gallon.

And finally, good old-fashioned local retail competition can affect the price of gasoline in a specific market.

Although all of these factors affect gasoline prices, perhaps nothing impacts them more than supply and demand. *NAPS*